



# Fast Facts

*about Sedgwick County Government*

## West Nile Virus

### What is the West Nile Virus?

It is an infection that is spread to people by the bite of an infected mosquito. The disease usually only causes a mild illness, but it can cause encephalitis (swelling of the brain), meningitis, or in rare cases, death.

### Who Can Get West Nile Virus?

Anyone can be infected with the virus if you are bitten by an infected mosquito. More severe infections normally affect the elderly and those with weakened immune systems.

### How is West Nile Virus Spread?

This infection is only spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. It is not spread from person to person or directly from birds. There is also no evidence that other insects or ticks transmit the virus.

### What are the Symptoms of West Nile Virus

Most people infected with the virus do not become ill. However, some with a mild infection may have a fever, headache, eye pain, muscle aches, joint pain, a rash and swollen lymph nodes. In severe cases, symptoms include extreme muscle weakness, inflammation of the brain, paralysis and coma. In rare cases, the infection may be fatal, particularly in the elderly and people with weakened immune systems. After an infected mosquito bite occurs, symptoms generally take 3 to 15 days to appear.

### How can I get more information?

Call the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-7300 or visit the Kansas Department of Health and Environment web site at [www.kdhe.state.ks.us](http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us) for the latest information on prevention and control activities in Kansas.

### How to Prevent Infection

Preventing mosquito bites will prevent the West Nile Virus. This can be done by personal protection and minimizing mosquito populations to do so, follow these simple tips:

- Limit time spent outdoors.
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants when outside.
- Using insect repellent containing DEET.
- Prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.
- Eliminate standing, stagnant water.
- Replace water in containers such as bird baths, kid's swimming pools etc. every three days.

### What is the Treatment for the West Nile Virus?

There is no specific treatment for the virus. A physician may prescribe medications to relieve the symptoms of the illness. In severe cases, hospitalization may be required. At this time, a vaccine for the virus does not exist.

### What about animals?

Animals can become infected with the West Nile Virus. Most recover, but there have been animals in the United States that have died. A vaccine is available for horses through veterinarians. Like humans, most animals infected will not show signs of the virus. There is no evidence that shows people can get the virus directly from other animals.

To Report a Dead Bird ...or Have a Bird Tested. Call the hotline 1-866-452-7810. This hotline includes detailed instructions on which birds will be tested in Kansas and how to arrange for pick up.

\*information from Kansas Department of Health and Environment

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